

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 25, 1999

**The Honorable Dick Gephardt
Democratic Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515**

Dear Dick:

We are writing as members of the New Democrat Coalition to urge the House Armed Services Committee to explore ways to immediately implement the President's recommended change in the computer export control laws and to streamline the process for adjusting export control levels for computers. We are concerned that the present six month delay is detrimental to the competitiveness of the domestic information technology sector without producing a corresponding national security benefit.

In light of significant technological advances in computer performance levels, we have consistently urged the Administration to adjust the computer export control threshold, and were pleased when on July 1, 1999, the President proposed adjusting the licensing threshold for Tier 3 countries. However, under current law, that increase cannot take effect for 180 days.

It has now been nearly four months since the President decided to relax export controls on computers. Due to the 180 day congressional review period, the computer export control threshold has not changed, but computer performance levels have continued to increase at dramatic rates.

We share the House Armed Services Committee's commitment to protecting national security and are committed to working with you and members of the committee to ensure that our export control policies are both effective and meaningful. At the same time, we agree with the President's report to Congress that concludes that, "technology advancements have made higher performance computers and related technology -- semiconductors, interconnects and software -- so widely available that the national security impact of maintaining the current level...would be marginal."

We urge the House to act before the end of the session to replace the current 180 day review period with a 30 day review. This change would make computer exports subject to the same review period as items on the munitions list including tanks, rockets, and high-performance aircraft, which require only a 30 day congressional notification.

As you know, the information technology sector has been a driving force behind our sustained economic growth. We must advance responsible export control policies that simultaneously advance our national security interests while maintaining the relative competitive advantage currently enjoyed by the U.S. information technology sector.

We look forward to working with you and members of the House Armed Services Committee on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Cal Dooley

Mike Faberow

Rush Holt

Bob Mure

Charles C. Fegally

Joseph Crowley

Sam Mingo

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